

PERSPECTIVE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS ON SUICIDE IDEATION AND ITS ASSOCIATED RISK FACTORS IN OGUN STATE

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Abstract

The study was conducted to assess the perspective of college students on suicide ideation and its associated risk factors in Ogun state. The study adopted an ex post facto research design type. The study included all three hundred level students (NCE III) from the two public colleges of education in Ogun State. The study's participants were chosen through a multistage sampling technique. The instruments used for data collection were the Personality Trait Inventory, Student Academic Stress Scale (SASS) and Suicidal Ideation Attribute Scale and factors. All the three instruments were adapted questionnaires designed to assess factors accounted for suicidal ideation among undergraduate students. Results from the study indicated that females were more in number than males (168/62.2%; 102/37.7%). Also, the Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience some of the major factors responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduates. Low self-esteem, environmental factors and interpersonal were selected by the majority of students in this study [$R = 0.682$, $R = 0.346$, $Adj. R = 0.345$]; [$F(4,265) = 7.93$, $p < 0.05$] causing suicidal ideation among colleges of education students. Recommendations were therefore made among others that factors associate with suicide ideation such as academic stress, family dysfunction and economic losses of livestock, and devastation of agricultural land among other environmental risk factors that contribute to this serious issue are on the alarming rate and is of public health concern to curb this menace among students.

Keywords: Adolescents, Perspective, Risk factors, Suicide ideation.

Introduction

Adolescents are the most vulnerable groups whose taste and preferences, attitude and behaviour always involve certain amount of risk. As they mature and become sexually active, they face serious health risks and crisis (Richter, 2000). Adolescence is a time for self-definition, marked by significant physical, psychosocial and cognitive change. It has been conventional to define adolescence as vulnerable groups whose taste and preferences, attitude and behaviour always involve certain amount of risk and various social vices that make them lose their senses (Ajibola&Agunbiade, 2021).

Recently, the life challenges experienced by individuals are becoming increasingly enormous due to changes in the dynamics of the society and life circumstances. Suicide results from a complex interaction of biological, genetic, psychological, sociological, cultural and environmental factors. Thus, suicide is sought by some individuals as a way of escaping from unbearable life challenges without thinking of the later consequences (Check, 2021).

Suicide is a global phenomenon that has deep consequence not just to the victim but also towards the bereaved, the community and the society at large (Jacob, 2017). Despite being preventable, almost a million people die by suicide, with low and middle-income countries accounting for

around 80% of global suicides, as stated by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2019). Nigeria, with a population of more than 200 million, is one of the world's suicide hotspots, with a suicide rate of 17.3 per 100,000 people, higher than the global (10.5 per 100,000) and African (12.0 per 100,000) figures. (WHO, 2020).

According to international statistics, the country's suicide rate has increased since 2012. Furthermore, Nigeria now reports the largest incidence of depression patients in Africa. Suicide rates have been highest among older men, but rates among young people have been rising at an alarming rate. Suicide rates among young people have risen to the point where they are now the demographic most at risk of suicide in one-third of all nations, including developed and developing (WHO, 2011).

In essence, Cole, Protinsky and Cross (2005) defined suicide as the complete process of a continuum that began with suicide ideation, followed by an attempt at suicide, and finally completed suicide. This means that every suicide attempt or completed suicide often starts with suicidal thoughts and this is captured in the concept of suicidal ideation. Suicidal ideation is defined as thinking about, considering, or planning suicide (Roberts, 2008; King et al., 2001).

While these definitions fall into successive levels of self-inflicted harm, they frequently follow one another in an individual who is predisposed to suicidal behavior; thus, a person who exhibits suicidal ideation should be counseled immediately to prevent these thoughts from developing into actions that cause self-injury. Similarly, suicidal behavior (SB) has been defined as intentional harm to oneself with the intent of ending one's life. Suicidality exists on a severity scale, with different levels of suicidal ideation signifying varying amounts of suicide risk.

It can range from a passive longing for death to active thoughts of suicide, and in the most extreme cases, a premeditated plot to commit suicide. Suicidal ideation is a substantial risk factor for future suicide, since it is linked to an increased chance of suicidal attempt and death. The global lifetime prevalence of suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts among all age groups is estimated to be 9 and 3%, respectively (Turecki & Bren, 2016).

In Nigeria, the dearth of suicide data is also shrouded with stigma, cultural and religious sentiments where people perceived suicidal attempts as sinful, a taboo and caused by evil forces, so the family are often times stigmatized and denied social opportunities (Oyedeji, 2021). Often, people prefer to conceal the mode of death, reporting suicides as accidental deaths or homicide. Many of the recorded incidents rely on police and medical records, none of which are complete and may have been influenced by the bereaved (Ohayi, 2018; Oyetunji, 2021).

Suicide remains a crime in Nigeria, according to Section 327 of the Criminal Code. Suicide methods in Nigeria include the use of poisons, self-cutting, kerosene burning, hanging, and weapons (Oyetunji et al., 2021). Several more techniques emerged because people who commit suicide are sometimes ambiguous, and some are impulsive responses to psychological pressures (Onotai & Ibekwe, 2010; Oyetunji et al., 2021).

Suicidal actions are more likely in specific situations that can be classified as risk factors for suicide (Psychological Autopsy, 1985). The risk factors include, but are not limited to, low socioeconomic status and educational attainment, not having employment; social stress; issues with family functioning, interpersonal connections, and support systems; trauma, such as sexual and physical abuse; personal losses; mental illnesses; feelings of hopelessness or worthlessness; sexual orientation issues; impaired judgement, lack of control over impulses, and destructive behaviors; poor coping abilities; and physical disease, or chronic suffering; exposure to other people's suicides; access to tools of total self-harm; and devastating and violent incidents such as

war or catastrophes caused by nature (WHO, 2006).

Agriculture, which is the deliberate practice of growing crops and raising of livestock in solving the food crisis and the economic hardship currently being experienced and to better the livelihood needs of the ever-increasing population, should also be looked into. Food crisis due to economic losses of man's favoured crops and livestock and devastation of agricultural land among other environmental risk factors that brings about malnutrition under nutrition has been opined to contribute to this serious issue which is on the alarming rate in most developing countries like Nigeria (Akanni and Ajayi, 2021). Several cases of suicide have been reported in the media, newspaper, bulletins and in the air.

Recently, a student of LadokeAkintola College of Technology; Ogbomosho hanged himself from his ceiling fan while his roommate was out. Another student of Babcock College, Ogun State, who was just 19 years old at the time of his death, committed suicide in his parents' home at Lagos (Eze-Obi, 2017). According to Vanguard Newspaper on the 6th April 2019, a lecturer at the Department of Mathematics in College of Ibadan ended his life through as a result of frustration of unfulfillment of his PhD programme and many more.

Within the context of academic institutions, challenges often manifest in forms of conflicts, self-destructive peer acceptance, bullying and victimization, personality traits, negative peer disappointment with school results and failure in studies, high demands at school during examination periods among others; which pose much stress to students to the extent that the thought of suicide is often considered. A study conducted by Oyetunji, T.P, Arafat, S.M.Y, and Famori, S.O, (2021) on suicide in Nigeria and observations from the content analysis of newspapers in Nigeria discovered that the majority of completed suicide cases were males (80.6%), as were 79.6% of all suicide reports in the country.

This demonstrates that men are more likely than women to die by suicide. A number variables contribute to male predominance, including neglecting the need for mental health treatment. Men are also less likely to seek and get assistance or therapy. Presently, suicide attempt is on the increase and at alarming rate and it can be prevented through the following strategies at our institution such as identifying people at risk, strengthening economy supports, create protective environment, teaching coping and problem-solving skill, lessen harm and prevent future risk, promoting community-based suicide prevention program and functional counseling center at various institution (CDC,2020).

The consequence of suicidal behaviour is not only on the victim but also the parents, siblings of the victims, the entire college communities and the society. On this premise, the study aimed at assessing the perspective of college students on suicide ideation and its associated risk factors in Ogun state.

Statement of the Problem

Suicide is an act of killing oneself intentionally. Anecdotal data revealed that the suicide rate among college students has reached an all-time high at several universities, raising public health concerns.

According to WHO studies conducted in 2009, adolescents are frequently at risk, and suicide is the second leading cause of death in Nigeria. Also, it has been observed that some of them seems to be experience thwarted belongingness which contributes to the occurrence of suicidal ideation among young adults because belongingness is an essential need at this stage, when the needs are not met thwarted belongingness will emerge as loneliness through the assertion of feeling disconnected or having dissatisfying social interactions.

The absence of reciprocally caring, positive and supportive social relationships in general or during difficult moments generates the feeling of social isolation. Despite the important to understand and explain issues associated with suicidal ideation, unfortunately, there are not much empirical studies conducted in study area. Thus, what informs suicidal ideation among college students, especially in Ogun State remains probable.

Purpose of the Study

- i. To identify the factors that lead to suicidal ideation among university undergraduates.
- ii. To investigate whether personality traits, environmental, social, and intrapersonal factors predict suicidal ideation among university undergraduates
- iii. To examine whether academic stress predict suicidal ideation among undergraduates
- iv. To investigate whether gender determines suicidal ideation among undergraduates

Research Questions

1. What are the factors responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduates?
2. To what extent would personality traits, environmental, social, and intrapersonal factors predict suicidal ideation among university undergraduates?
3. Would academic stress predict suicidal ideation among undergraduates?
4. Are female students prone to suicidal ideation compared to their male counterparts?

MethodologyS

Research Design

The study adopted the ex-post facto research design type. The implication of this is that no variables were manipulated. The study is therefore the ex-post facto type where data is usually collected after the events have already taken place.

Population of the Study

The population of the study were all three hundred level students (NCE III) of the two public Colleges of Education in Ogun State (Federal College of Education Abeokuta and Tai Solarin College of Education Ijebu-Ode).

Sample and Sampling Technique

The study's participants were selected using a multi-stage sampling procedure. Ogun State has two public Colleges of Education (Federal College of Education Abeokuta and Tai Solarin College of Education Ijebu-Ode) and the two colleges had six (6) schools. At the first stage, all the six school was randomly selected. The six schools were school Languages, Sciences, Arts & Social Sciences, Vocational, Education and Early Childhood Care and Primary Education. At the second stage of sampling, three schools were purposively selected from each school for convenience because some schools were preparing for examination at the time of data collection and not all schools gave access. Lastly, 45 students from each NCEIII of the selected schools were randomly selected. This resulted in a total of two hundred and seventy students for the study.

Instrument for Data Collection

The instruments used for data collection were Personality Trait Inventory developed by John, Donahue and Kentle (1991), Student Academic Stress Scale (SASS) developed by Basari (2011), and Suicidal Ideation Attribute Scale and factors developed by Spijker, Batterham, Callear, Farrer, Christensen, Reynolds and Keerkhof (2011). All the three instruments were adapted questionnaires designed to assess factors accounted for suicidal ideation among undergraduate students. Part A contained respondents' demographic data, such as their gender, family background, age and birth order etc. Part B contained 30 items scored from 1 to 4 on a 4-point

Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree respectively to measure Personality Trait Inventory, Student Academic Stress Scale Suicidal Ideation Attribute Scale and factors i.e. 10 items each for the variables. The instruments were facially validated by two experts in items development. The reliability of the Personality Trait Inventory Scale, Student Academic Stress Scale (SASS) and Suicidal Ideation Attribute Scale and factors were established using Chrombach Alpha to determine items which are consistent with the others and the reliability coefficient of the instruments were found to be 0.73, 0.78 and 0.56 respectively.

Procedure for Data collection and Analysis

The researcher administered the questionnaire personally with the help of Dean of each of the selected schools and a total of two hundred and seventy (270) questionnaires were collected for the analysis. The data collected for this study were analyzed using percentage count and multiple regression analysis.

Results and Discussion

Results

Socio-demographic characteristics of the Respondents

The demographic variables of respondents were analyzed under their respective subheadings and presented in table bellow:

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender of the Respondents		
Male	102	37.7
Female	168	62.2
Age of the Respondents		
16-20 years	103	31.1
21-25 year	111	41.1
26 years and above	56	20.7
Religion Affiliation		
Christianity	178	65.9
Islam	92	34.1
Marital Status		
Single	207	76.7
Married	63	23.3

The gender analysis of the respondents revealed that 168 of them were female representing 62.2% while males were 102 representing 37.7% of the respondents. By implication, females were more in number. Also, the table further showed the distribution of respondents based on their age. 41.1% of the respondents are between the age of 21-25 years, 31.1% fall between the age 16-20 years. On the other hand, just 20.7% of the respondents are above 26 years of age. In addition, 65.9% of the respondents practice Christianity while 34.1% practice Islam. Also, 76.7% of the participants are singles while 23.3% are married.

Research Question One: What are the factors responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduates?

Table 2: Factors Responsible for Suicidal Ideation among Undergraduates

Factors responsible for Suicidal Ideation	Not	Minor	Major
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	Factor	Factors	Factors
1 Personal trait factors influencing (Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience)	39(14.4%)	57(21.1%)	174(64.4%)
2 Problems with romantic relationship	97(35.9%)	64(23.7%)	109(40.4%)
3 Trouble at home	43(15.9%)	81(30.0%)	146(52.9%)
4 Academic stress	56(20.7%)	65(24.1%)	149(55.2%)
5 Poor economic background	45(16.7%)	159(58.9%)	66(24.4%)
6 Low self esteem	45(16.7%)	81 (30.0%)	144(53.3%)
7 Environmental Factors	85(31.5%)	72(26.7%)	113(41.8%)
8 Intrapersonal Factors Influencing Suicide Ideation	49(18.1%)	81(30.0%)	140(51.9%)

Table 2 revealed the factors responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduates. From the table, majority (64.4%) of the respondents indicated that Personal trait (Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Conscientiousness, Openness to Experience) is a major factor responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduates, 21.1% indicated that personality traits is minor factors while 14.4% shows that personality trait is not a factors responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduate students in colleges of education. Also, 40.4% indicated that problems with romantic relationship is major factors responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduates, 23.7% perceived it as minor challenges. However, 35.9% indicated that problems with romantic relationship is not major factors responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduate students in colleges of education. On the trouble at home, 52.9% revealed that trouble at home is a major factor that causes suicidal ideation, 30% saw trouble at home as minor factors causing suicidal ideation while 15.9% revealed that trouble at home is not responsible for suicidal ideation among colleges of education students. In the same vein, majority revealed that academic stress majorly responsible for suicidal ideation. However, 20% shows that academic stress is not responsible for suicidal ideation. In addition, observation revealed that poor economic background is a minor factor responsible for suicidal ideation, 24.1% indicated major factors while 16.7% revealed that is not responsible. This implies that family economic factor is a minor factor responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduate students. Low self-esteem, environmental factors and interpersonal were selected by the majority of students in this study as causing suicidal ideation among colleges of education students. The general observation from the result showed that all the factors indicated are majorly responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduates' students in colleges of education.

Research Question Two: To what extent would personality traits, environmental, social, and intrapersonal factors predict suicidal ideation among university undergraduates?

Table 3: Regression summary and ANOVA contribution of all the predictor variables on criterion variable

Multiple R = .682^a, R. Square = .346 Adjusted R Square =.345 Standard Error = 10.358

Analysis of Variance

Source of Variance	SS	df	MS	F	Sig.	Remark
Regression	1228.312	4	307.078	7.93	.000 ^b	Significant
Residual	10264.308	265	38.733			

Total 11492.620 399

In Tables 3, results revealed that there is a linear relationship between personality traits, environmental, social, and intrapersonal and suicidal ideation among university undergraduates. There is a linear relationship between these variables, and all four predictors jointly account for 34.5% observed variance in the suicidal ideation among university undergraduates, [$R = 0.682$, $R^2 = 0.346$, $Adj. R^2 = 0.345$]. The model significantly predicts and explains suicidal ideation among university undergraduates, [$F_{(4, 265)} = 7.93$, $p < 0.05$]. These results would mean that there is a significant composite or joint contribution of these factors variables (personality traits, environmental, social, and intrapersonal) to the explanation of suicidal ideation among university undergraduates.

Table 4: Test of Significance of Regression Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	37.215	2.271		16.384	.000
Personality traits Factors	.397	.030	.322	3.101	.000
Environmental Factors	.410	.048	.339	8.468	.001
Social Factors	.513	.038	.685	3.393	.000
Intrapersonal Factors	.212	.057	.101	2.428	.002

a. Dependent Variable: suicidal ideation

Towards the aim of revealing the relative effects personality traits, environmental, social, and intrapersonal on suicidal ideation among undergraduates' students in colleges of education, a multi-variable regression analysis has been conducted. In regression model, as the results of *t*-test related to the significance of regression coefficient are examined, it surfaces that all factors indicated enhanced suicidal ideation among undergraduates' students as environmental factors ($t = 8.468$; $p < 0.05$), social factors ($t = 3.393$; $p < 0.05$), personality traits factors ($t = 3.101$; $p < 0.05$) and intrapersonal factors ($t = 2.428$; $p < 0.05$) significantly contributed to this prediction model and there is a corresponding statistical rise in suicidal ideation among undergraduates' students. According to standardized regression coefficient (β) the relative order of significance of predictive variables on the suicidal ideation among undergraduates' students are social factors ($\beta = 0.685$), environmental factors ($\beta = 0.339$), personality traits ($\beta = 0.322$), and intrapersonal factors ($\beta = 0.101$).

Research Question Three: Would academic stress predict suicidal ideation among undergraduates' students in colleges of education?

Table 5: Regression coefficient of academic stress on suicidal ideation among undergraduates

	B	Std Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	12.55	4.90		13.07	.000
Academic Stress	.11	.02	.31	10.24	.000

Table 5 showed result was significant ($\beta = .31$, $t = 10.24$, $p < 0.05$). This implies that academic stress (like carryover of course, coping strategies etc.) significantly predicts suicide ideation

among undergraduate students in colleges of education. Table 5 further showed that academic stress is positively associated with data collection disruption and that the latter can be predicted from the former by means of the regression equation.

Discussion and Conclusion

As presented in the first research question about the factors responsible for suicidal ideation among undergraduates in terms of the factors are personality traits (such as agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, neuroticism, openness to experience) was significantly ($P < 0.05$) enough to predict suicidal ideation among undergraduates. This finding was not in agreement with the findings of Sonia *et al.* (2020) which showed that personality trait is not significantly predicted suicidal ideation. Also, the present result is not in tandem with the findings of Chioqueta and Stiles (2011) who observed that neuroticism had a positive correlation with suicidal ideation and psychotic tendencies. In the same vein, oyetunji *et al.* (2020) arrived at a result that slightly agreed with the findings of the present study, where they found that unknown or not mentioned, low self-esteem, academic stress, trouble at home and family disharmony made the top three risk factors for suicide ideation. The findings of the present study however revealed several methods of committing suicides which is in line with Adegbite – Badmus (2019). The authors profound that female polytechnic students committing suicide than their male counter parts; taking snipers/rat killer and using dangerous weapons are the leading methods for suicide attempts and actions. The third research question which informed that there will be a significant relationship between academic stress and suicide ideation among undergraduates was also significant ($p < 0.05$). It therefore implies that the level of academic stress experiences by students with family dis harmony contribute to suicidal ideation among undergraduates. These findings however corroborate the reports of Donath *et al.* (2014) that parent-student conflict affects the likelihood of entertaining suicidal ideation. Poor relationships with parents and challenges with academic challenges were also established by Arria *et al.* (2014) in their study. They however concluded that the poor relationship between parents is also among the predictors of suicidal ideation. The authors also submitted that high level of academic stress has a significant relationship with suicidal ideation. These among other risk factors could have informed the results obtained in this study.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are therefore made that:

- Suicide ideation is a silent killer that terminates life without remedy. But the stigma remains constant in the heart of the relatives, friends and family. As in formed this study, there a lot of factors associate with suicide ideation such as academic stress and family dysfunction and economic losses of man'sfavoured crops and livestock and devastation of agriculturalland among other environmental risk factors that contributes to this serious issue are on the alarming rate and is of public health concern to eradicate the menace among students.
- The Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with the Ministry of Health should include the health implications of suicide ideation in the general education curriculum for colleges of education so that they will not fall victims.
- Government should also provide suicide counseling personnel who will always be available to offer assistance to those in need. This would mean establishing a body for coordinating efforts on suicide prevention in the society/universities.

- Establishment of specific College-based mental health services in various Health units in the colleges is hereby proposed; this is necessary in order to rehabilitate the victims and also to intensify and maintain the tempo through public information and education on the menace of suicide ideation.

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